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SUBJECT: Eastern Indonesia: Violence Increases After
Poso 3 Executions

Ref: A. JAKARTA 4365
[B](#). JAKARTA 11799

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The execution of the "Poso 3" on September 22 was immediately followed by an outbreak of violence in East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) (Flores and West Timor) and later in Central Sulawesi, where the executions occurred. The reaction was not unexpected by local officials; police in NTT had told Principal Officer in August their top security concern was the potential for trouble once the executions went forward and the Central Sulawesi police chief had called for 5,000 additional officers to support security for the executions. Violence in Poso and Tentena has surged in the past few days as the already tense situation worsened with several small attacks provoking larger ones, resulting in a large-scale police redeployment in the area. Social factors which fed the NTT outburst are local Catholic residents' feelings of discrimination and neglect by the Muslim Javanese central government, moral opposition to the death penalty by local and international religious leaders and international NGOs and the sense that the Poso 3, originating from NTT, were being picked on since there were many additional people culpable for the violence that will never be prosecuted. The NTT violence was also a reaction of simmering tensions and unhappiness with government policies on internally displaced persons in NTT and the all too usual groups of provocateurs who seem to never miss an opportunity to advance their own agendas through violence. End Summary.

Central Sulawesi - Violent Reaction Picking Up Steam

[1](#)2. (SBU) Initial reaction in Central Sulawesi was emotionally charged but muted due to the heavy security provided by police and military personnel (see ref B). Police were withdrawn from Tentena and Poso late in the day of the executions as the situation was calm. The bodies of Tibo and Riwu were airlifted to Morowali, Central Sulawesi, where they were greeted by a mob of several thousand mourners and buried in separate ceremonies 40 kilometers apart. Police maintained a heavy presence in the Morowali area and no violence started during or after the funerals. ConGen contacts say that the situation in Poso and Tentena remained tense but calm after the executions.

13. (SBU) There have been several recent reports of escalating violence in Poso and Tentena since the executions. According to Darlis Muhammad, a journalist for Tempo, a car traveling from Makassar to Tentena was found in Taripa, a predominantly Christian village 20 miles from Tentena, with its two Muslim passengers missing on September 23. The Central Sulawesi police Chief Badrodin Haiti arrived in Taripa on September 28 to investigate the disappearances. A crowd of 5,000 attending a traditional local harvest festival rushed his helicopter. Fearing the worst, the 30 mobile brigade police assigned to protect Haiti "brutally" repelled the surging residents using batons and gun butts. Haiti ended up fleeing on the back of a motorcycle as his helicopter was rendered inoperable by the crowd. The crowd, angered by the response, burned the local police station and three of its vehicles. The crowd also killed a police dog during the attack and ate it, apparently intending to offend local Muslim police officers.

14. (SBU) Early September 30, newspapers reported three separate small bombs were detonated in Poso City, one near a church, causing no injuries or damage. A few hours later, police and military officers defused a potentially dangerous situation when two angry mobs of several hundred men from neighboring Poso villages, one Christian and one Muslim, faced off ready to fight. On October 1, ConGen contacts in Poso said a group of several dozen masked assailants in a predominantly Muslim area of Poso City blockaded a road with a burning motorcycle and attacked five passengers on a public transport. A Christian woman reportedly died from stab wounds suffered in the attack. In a separate

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incident the same day, a Poso City police substation was burned by a group of people. Banjela Paliuju, governor of Central Sulawesi, held an emergency meeting of local political and religious leaders in Poso City on October 1 to appeal for patience and calm to avoid further violence.

15. (SBU) 5,000 mobile brigade police have been redeployed in Poso in a show of force to try to avoid further violence. According to Darwis Waru, head of the Poso Conflict Resolution Working Group, local political and religious leaders are of divided opinions as to whether the massive police presence will diffuse or exacerbate the security situation. Local residents fear a return to the violence of the recent past and deeply distrust the police, as they are seen to be a causal force in the past violence. Local leaders hope to limit the time large numbers of police are patrolling Poso streets in an effort to limit their contact with the public.

Initial Violence in Flores - Situation Now Calm

16. (SBU) Reaction in Flores, home of Domingus Da Silva, was initially peaceful, if emotional. However, violence broke out later September 22 following the execution, when approximately 3,000 people in Maumere rioted and destroyed the local parliament building, the local prosecutor's office, and burnt down the district Court building. The violence seemed to be sparked by the news that Da Silva had been hastily buried in Palu rather than returned to Flores for a "proper" burial. Police have arrested three people they believe instigated the riots, including activists from the Indonesian Catholic Student Association (PMKRI). The Chairman of the PMKRI Presidium in Jakarta was unhappy about the involvement of the local organization, noting that he believes there are many radical Christian and Muslim "interest" groups who would like to see NTT

become another Poso.

17. (SBU) The night after the executions, Da Silva's family forcibly exhumed his coffin from the cemetery in Palu and brought it to Santa Maria Church where local supporters prayed and held vigil until his body was flown on a domestic commercial flight to Maumere, Flores on September 24. Dozens of military personnel and police officers guarded the Palu airport during transit of the body. There were no reports of violence in Palu. In Maumere, Da Silva's body was taken to Santo Yosef Cathedral where thousands of wailing mourners joined a mass prayer for the deceased led by father Fransciscus Pao of the Maumere Diocese, after which Da Silva was buried in his home village of Waikodo. Our contacts report that all major Maumere leaders, including Sikka regent Alex Longginus, Maumere Police Chief Adjunct Senior Commissioner Endang Syafrudin and Frans Seda, former Minister of Finance during the Suharto administration, attended the funeral.

A Strong Reaction in West Timor

18. (SBU) The greatest violence occurred in Kefamenanu in central West Timor and Atambua in the northern West Timor, near the border with East Timor, on the day of the execution (see ref B). On the surface, these cities would not be likely locations for such strong emotions on the Poso 3 case. According to ConGen contacts, opposition to the executions was the spark but the existing social stresses created the tinderbox. These areas are suffering from lingering drought, growing poverty, and other stresses exacerbated by the ten thousand internally displaced persons (IDPs) from East Timor, many of whom have resisted resettlement and are still living in camps (see 05 Jakarta 15889). In addition, contacts indicate that the rioting in these areas was worsened by large numbers of East Timorese IDPs leaving their camps and entering Atambua specifically to add to the chaos. NTT police, augmented by Mobile Brigade reinforcements sent from Bali, have arrested at least five people believed to be

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the instigators of the violence.

The Death Penalty and Justice

19. (SBU) Opposition to the death penalty by Indonesian and foreign Catholics (and some Protestants) as well as by human rights NGOs and their intense lobbying of the Indonesian government was a factor in the controversy surrounding these executions. (Note: Expatriate priests still exert strong influence over Catholics in NTT, especially in Flores.) Many NTT residents believe that the executions were previously postponed as a response to appeals by Pope Benedict XVI and the Bishop's conference of Indonesia. Other strong appeals were made by the EU, several individual European nations, and NGOs such as Amnesty International. Central Sulawesi contacts contradict that notion, claiming that former Central Sulawesi police chief Oegroseno was unprepared to carry out the executions last August as scheduled.

110. (SBU) During recent visits to NTT, ConGen Surabaya officers heard from all levels of contacts the common belief that as NTT natives, the three did not receive justice. When probed to articulate where the justice system failed, we heard several theories. They included the three were guilty but were scapegoats for more influential protestant culprits from Central Sulawesi (evidenced by the lack of other convictions);

the three were guilty but should not be given the death penalty, in light of the less severe sentences given to Muslims for other "similar" crimes; and they must be innocent as a NTT native and/or Christian can not receive a fair trial in Indonesia. Strangely, few of our contacts argued that the three were innocent because they did not participate in the 2000 massacres. Some of the more popular banners in Maumere included: "Where are the masterminds of Poso?" "Don't make Tibo and his friends the scapegoats" and "Don't oppress people for the sake of certain interest groups."

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